

MINIMUM ADMISSIONS STANDARDS: HECB Admissions Policy for Alternative Admissions

April 2001

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) is required by law to establish minimum requirements for admission to Washington's public baccalaureate institutions (RCW 28B.80.350). The HECB adopted the current admissions policy in 1987; this policy was fully implemented for students entering fall term 1992. The policy describes minimum high school core requirements in terms of years of study. Minimum admission criteria currently include grade point average, pre-college test scores (SAT/ACT), and a distribution of college preparatory high school core-course requirements.

Up to 15 percent of freshmen and up to 10 percent of graduate and professional students at each of the six public baccalaureate institutions may be admitted using an alternative standard. In 1994, the HECB established separate alternative standards for freshmen applicants who are 25 years of age or older and meet standards appropriate for their age and personal experiences. Similar provisions exist for regular admission of first-time graduate students seeking initial entry with significant professional experience. Those provisions were adopted in March 1998.

A STATE PERSPECTIVE ON STUDENT PREPARATION

Extensive HECB research has shown that students who study a challenging, college-preparatory high school curriculum are:

- Better prepared for and transition to college more easily;¹
- Less likely to require remedial coursework;² and
- More likely to continue their studies and attain a degree.³

The HECB adopted minimum admissions standards in 1988 that were intended to estimate an applicant's "probability of success." Since predictions of future success must be grounded on past achievements, a challenging college-preparatory high school curriculum and the high school grade point average are the primary indicators of success in college. A standardized test score provides an indicator of potential success. The first two are better predictors than the third, but the three together (with the final two combined in an index) produce the best probability of success.⁴ The admissions index is a good predictor of first year college students' grade point

¹ *Higher Education Coordinating Board Briefing on Freshman Admissions Policy*, 1994

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

averages but is not a good predictor of the likelihood of students continuing their studies beyond the first year.⁵

CURRENT STATUS OF ALTERNATIVE ADMISSIONS

Undergraduate students who are currently admitted under the 15 percent alternative standards must satisfy the following requirements:

1. Submit a score on the SAT or ACT;
2. Submit a transcript showing achievement of a 2.00 high school grade point average or a passing score on the General Educational Development (GED) Certificate test;
3. Complete high school course requirements as prescribed, with no more than three subject years waived; and
4. Present evidence of success outside the classroom and strong motivation to succeed in college.

Washington public baccalaureate institutions generally have far more qualified students who meet the minimum admissions standards than they can accommodate, making alternative admissions quite competitive. As a result, institutions generally do not make full use of the 15 percent alternative admissions pool.

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE TO SAT/ACT REQUIREMENT

Alternative criteria are intended to assist students who may demonstrate an ability to succeed despite falling below current minimum standards. However, even the current alternative criteria may limit access to a public baccalaureate institution for some promising students. To address the needs of those students, the Board has requested the development of alternative admissions criteria that do not require a standardized test score.

The Planning and Policy Committee recommends the following modification to the alternative admissions standard:

- **Submit a score on the SAT or ACT unless a waiver has been granted by the receiving baccalaureate institution.**

⁵ Ibid.

This modification does the following:

1. Provides considerable institutional flexibility;
2. Recognizes the existence of a competitive alternative admissions pool with more qualified applicants than can be accommodated; and
3. Avoids widespread instances of students dismissing submitting standardized tests.

To assess the impact of this modified standard, the Board asks institutions to submit a report summarizing:

1. The number of students admitted under alternative admissions standards (total and percentage), and
2. The number of students admitted under alternative admissions standards without the SAT or ACT (total and percent).

The report is due to the Board at the conclusion of each spring term.

RESOLUTION NO. 01-18

WHEREAS, The Higher Education Coordinating Board is required by law to establish *minimum* requirements for admission to Washington's public baccalaureate institutions (RCW 28B.80.350); and

WHEREAS, The current minimum admissions standards require all students who are enrolling directly from high school to submit an SAT or ACT pre-college test as part of the admissions process; and

WHEREAS, Up to 15 percent of freshmen and up to 10 percent of graduate and professional students at each of the six public baccalaureate institutions may be admitted using an alternative standard; and

WHEREAS, Public baccalaureate institutions have far more qualified students who meet the minimum admissions standards than they can accommodate, making alternative admissions quite competitive; and

WHEREAS, The Higher Education Coordinating Board is concerned that the current alternative criteria may limit access to a public baccalaureate institution for some promising students;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board amends the current alternative admissions standards to permit public baccalaureate institutions to waive the SAT or ACT examinations on a case-by-case basis.

Adopted:

April 11, 2001

Attest:

Bob Craves, Chair

Kristianne Blake, Secretary